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OBHEY WARNS U.S. HAS TO GET A HANDLE ON HEALTH CARE
INSURANCE INDUSTRY AND OTHER SPECIAL INTERESTS HAVE BLOCKED HEALTH REFORMS FOR 60 YEARS

WISCONSIN RAPIDS, WI – At the Wisconsin Rapids Labor Day Picnic today Seventh District Congressman Dave Obey (D-WI) warned that the insurance industry and other special interests that have blocked health care reform for more than 60 years are trying to block it again; “and we simply can’t afford to let that happen,” he said. “Things will only get worse if we don’t act now.”

In 1948, when healthcare costs were 4% of our economy and President Truman began pushing for health care reform, the insurance industry and other special interests in the healthcare establishment frightened people into opposing Truman’s efforts, and nothing happened.

In the 70’s, when healthcare costs had doubled – to 8% - of our economy, President Nixon pushed for reform; he was caught in the same insurance industry and special interest propaganda crossfire, and again nothing happened.

In the 90’s, healthcare costs continued to skyrocket and President Clinton pushed for reform. Again the insurance industry and other special interests’ propaganda machine scared the American people, and again nothing happened.

“Now, there are over 46 million Americans without health insurance, healthcare costs are four times where they were in ’48 - at over 16 % of our economy - and it’s predicted that family insurance costs will continue to rise by \$1800 a year, if we don’t act,” Obey added. “But the insurance industry and other special interests are at it again, trying to keep reform from

happening. But, after 60 years of half truths and misleading information, I don't think Americans are going to be scared or misled into opposing major reform.

"The only way that we are going to keep the insurance companies honest," Obey said, "is to have a strong public option."

"I've received letter after letter from people telling me about their inability to pay for health care; about insurance companies cancelling their policies or jacking up their rates; about small businesses being charged more for coverage, and about people being denied coverage they've paid for because of the 'pre-existing conditions' gimmick. We all know that the system we have is broken. The only question is whether we will all stand up and demand reform – or if we will let the insurance industry and other special interests win again, said Obey"

Noting that the package will probably be significantly modified before it's in its final form, Obey said "what we do know is that we want to reform the current health insurance system," in the following ways:

- Give those who already have coverage more stability and security;
- Put patients and doctors in charge of medical decisions, instead of insurance companies;
- Prevent insurance companies from denying coverage or charging more because of diabetes, heart disease or any other pre-existing condition;
- Limit out-of-pocket expenses to make sure no American family risks bankruptcy or financial ruin because a loved one gets sick;
- Enable those who don't have insurance to choose a quality, affordable plan through a new health insurance exchange;
- Help American businesses compete by protecting them from the growing cost of health care;
- Make sure that providers begin to be reimbursed based on the quality of medical outcomes, rather than the volume of procedures they perform;
- Expand consumer choices to keep the insurance companies honest by creating a strong public option.

"For those who say we should slow down on healthcare, I say, we've been waiting for sixty years! The time to act is now! For those who say we can't afford it, I say, we can't afford not to reform our health care system. Without reform, it's predicted that in just a few years, the average healthcare deductible will be \$2,700 and co-payments will continue to go up too," Obey

concluded. “The choice is not between this health care bill and perfection – it’s between reform and the status quo. And the cost of inaction is unbelievable; family budgets will be crippled, American businesses will fall behind, and the federal government will go broke.”

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